
Truthfulness.

There is to-day no greater need in the life of individuals of society than truthfulness, which means integrity of character. Indeed, truthfulness is the foundation of character-building. Talent, genius, nor inspiration can compensate for the lack of truthfulness, and without truthfulness and integrity of character, talent may lead to grand mental conquests—genius may soar to the illimitable heights of the imaginative world, and inspiration may carry the soul into the beautiful realm of the mental spheres, but, if, deeper than this, there lies not the diamond of truth, steadily illuminating heart and mind, all of man's grand achievements, and all his victories fall to the low, and faith of human kind for it is only the truthful spirit that inspires and holds the confidence of the people, and stands as a beacon light to guide wayward wandering ones into the paths of rectitude. Without this element of truthfulness, all else that is good and grand at rest, we look in vain for true manhood and womanhood. Without it mental sky may be brilliant with comet-flashes and meteoric gleams, the calm, clear, and steady shining light of the everlasting stars is wanting. Unfortunately the existing customs and conventionalities of society develop and cultivate the spirit of coyness and dissimulation. Even in sacred life at home, where, more than in any other place, we expect to find loyalty of soul, honesty of motive, sincerity of heart and undisguised frankness and heartiness of conduct and expression, we too often feel the blighting effects of a deceit and hypocrisy. Even the dear children, wayward in their sweet and innocent boyhood, are taught by example to equivocate and to conceal the truth. Through their childhood they receive lessons in the art of deceiving. What wonder that, in the years of manhood, these buds of evil, whose seeds were so thoughtlessly sown by the mother's own hand, in the heart-garden of her beloved child, should bear the fruit of so poisonous luxuriance. What wonder that our sons and daughters grow dissipated to the truth, because of a science warped by evil guiding the parent hand. We believe that humanity naturally loves and seeks truth, that only a perversion of our noble human nature leads to the utterance of false words, and to the practice of truthful acts. Then let parents and others guard with sacred care that it is in child life that we must inculcate the practice of truthfulness, in word and deed.

Agnosticism.

God will always be unknown if we stop on finding him for ourselves, yet on ignoring the evidence that has been seeking for and finding away to the heart of man, throughout all the story of the ages. Revelation is the true answer, and, in a sense, the only answer, to agnosticism. If the universe were really the insoluble problem that it is so easy to represent it while we stand afar from it, the bewildered and unaided, and to explain all the contradictions and paradoxes of this complicated life, we are to explain the story of all celestial patriarch after patriarch, priest after priest, and prophet after prophet, the training of the people of Israel, the selection of the king, the steady guidance of a family, a race, a nation, through all sorts of vicissitudes, most disastrous and humiliating, till the story of the chosen culminates in that of the perfect who dies to give us freedom in the future. If he promises to redeem in course, if we insist on knowing as he knows as God has shown that he knows us, we shall all be lost. There is nothing more possible than for man to fathom the riddles of this most unintelligible life. But the question for us is not whether we can understand it, but whether there is or is not one who understands us, and has shown us, in individual life through conscience, in the national life through the prophetic light of the past, that he holds the key to our most secret thoughts, though we have not the time to any of his except those which engraves upon our hearts and are indelibly in the story of one whose people. The real failure of agnosticism is their failure to examine the possession of the Jewish-Christian Churches by the one God which guided them. If the universe were really the insoluble problem of the human conscience, we would be what it is, and the story of Jewish and Christian Churches would never have been at all. It is impossible to conceive the chance manufacture of such a clue as that to the riddle of the universe, by a people selfish, so obstinate in resisting the truth in which nevertheless they have believed, so ready to risk the lives of the bit and curl to the subtleties of which they nevertheless constantly succumbed, so eager to rid of a yoke which, if agnosticism were true, was a mere phantasm of their fancy. The strength of agnosticism depends on the art of resisting conscience, and ignoring also the great historical embolism of force of conscience which we find in the history of the Jewish people. The history of the world's man can never be an internal contact with the true principles of life without being conscious that there is in it something which cannot explain away, so the historian can never come into contact with history of Revelation without being conscious that he is face to face with real manifestation of an invisible truthfulness which thoroughly commands man, however little man comprehends his deeper counsels, however resolutely man may order from his appointed ways.

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